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Alvis

Publié le **26 février 2012**

Alvis Car and Engineering Company Ltd

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Alvis Car and Engineering Company Ltd

FORMER TYPE	Private company
INDUSTRY	Automotive industry
SUCCESSOR(S)	Rover Company
FOUNDED	Coventry, England 1919
FOUNDER(S)	Thomas George John
DEFUNCT	1967
HEADQUARTERS	Coventry, England
NUMBER OF LOCATIONS	*Production locations:* Coventry, England:
AREA SERVED	Worldwide
KEY PEOPLE	Thomas George John Chairman and Managing Director, 1919 – 1944 Geoffrey de Freville John Joseph Parkes Chairman and Managing Director, 1946 – 1973 George Thomas Smith-Clarke Chief Engineer and General Manager, 1922 – 1950 William M. Dunn Chief Engineer, Vehicle Division, 1922 – 1959 A.F. Varney Chief Engineer, Aero Engine Division, 1922 – 1972

PRODUCTS	Automobiles, military vehicles, aircraft engines
WEBSITE	www.alviscars.co.uk/alviscars.php

References: [1]

Alvis Car and Engineering Company Ltd was a British manufacturing company that existed in Coventry, England from 1919 – 1967. In addition to automobiles designed for the civilian market, the company also produced racing cars, aircraft engines, armoured cars and other armoured fighting vehicles, the latter continuing long after civilian car production ceased.

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[edit] History of the company

1932 Alvis Speed 20 Tourer

1937 Alvis Speed 25 Offord Roadster

1938 Alvis 4.3 Litre Saloon

[EDIT] EARLY HISTORY

The original company, T.G. John and Company Ltd., was founded in 1919 by Thomas George John (1880 – 1946). Its first products were stationary engines, carburetors and motorscooters. Following complaints from the Avro aircraft company whose logo bore similarities to the original winged green triangle, the more familiar inverted red triangle incorporating the word « Alvis » evolved. On December 14, 1921, the company officially changed its name to **The Alvis Car and Engineering Company Ltd**. Geoffrey de Freville (1883 – 1965) designed the first Alvis engine and is also responsible for the company name.[1]

The origin of the name *Alvis* has been the subject of a great deal of speculation over the years. Some have suggested that de Freville proposed the name *Alvis* as a compound of the words « aluminium » and « vis » (meaning « strength » in Latin), or perhaps it may have been derived from the Norse mythological weaponsmith, Alvíss. De Freville however vigorously rejected all of these theories. In 1921, he specifically stated that the name had no meaning whatsoever, and was chosen simply because it could be easily pronounced in any language. He reaffirmed this position in the early 1960s, stating that any other explanations for the source of the name were purely coincidental.[1]

Production was relocated to Holyhead Road in Coventry, where from 1922 to 1923 they also made the Buckingham car. In 1922 George Thomas Smith-Clarke (1884 – 1960) left his job as assistant works manager at Daimler and joined Alvis as Chief Engineer and Works Manager. Smith-Clarke was accompanied by William M. Dunn, who also left his job as a draughtsman at Daimler to become Chief Draughtsman at Alvis. This partnership lasted for nearly 28 years and was responsible for producing some of the most successful products in the company's history. Smith-Clarke left in 1950, and Dunn assumed Smith-Clarke's position as Chief Engineer, remaining in that position until 1959.[1]

De Freville's first engine design was a four-cylinder engine with aluminium pistons and pressure lubrication, which was unusual for that time. The first car model using de Freville's engine was the Alvis 10/30. It was an instant success and established the reputation for quality workmanship and superior performance for which the company was to become famous. The original 10/30 side-valve engine was improved, becoming by 1923 the overhead valve Alvis 12/50, a highly successful sports car which was produced until 1932. Around 700 of the 12/50 models and 120 of the later Alvis 12/60 models survive today.[*citation needed*]

1927 saw the introduction of the six-cylinder Alvis 14.75 and this engine became the basis for the long line of luxurious six-cylinder Alvis cars produced up to the outbreak of World War II. These cars were elegant and full of technical innovations. Independent front suspension and the world's first all-synchromesh gearbox came in 1933 followed by servo assisted brakes. The Alvis 12/75 model was introduced in 1928, a model bristling with innovation, such as front-wheel drive, in-board brakes, overhead camshaft and, as an option, a Roots type supercharger.[*citation needed*]

As with many upmarket engineering companies of the time, Alvis did not produce their own coachwork, relying instead on the many available coachbuilders in the Midlands area, such as Carbodies, Charlesworth Bodies, Cross and Ellis, Duncan Industries (Engineers) Ltd, E. Bertelli Ltd, Grose, Gurney Nutting, Hooper, Lancefield Coachworks, Martin Walter Ltd, Mayfair, Mulliners, Tickford, Vanden Plas, Weymann Fabric Bodies, and William Arnold Ltd. Several cars also survive with quite exotic one-off bodywork from other designers such as Holbrook, a U.S. coachbuilder.[2]

In 1936 the company name was shortened to **Alvis Ltd**, and aircraft engine and armoured vehicle divisions were added to the company by the beginning of World War II. Smith-Clarke designed several models during the 1930s and 1940s, including the six-cylinder Speed 20, the Speed 25, and the Alvis 4.3 Litre model.[1]

[EDIT] SECOND WORLD WAR

Car production was initially suspended in September 1939 following the outbreak of war in Europe, but was later resumed and production of the 12/70, Crested Eagle, Speed 25, and 4.3 Litre continued well into 1940. The car factory was severely damaged on November 14, 1940 as a result of several bombing raids on Coventry by the German Luftwaffe, although ironically the armaments factory suffered little damage. Much valuable cutting gear and other equipment was lost and car production was suspended for the duration of the war, only resuming during the latter part of 1946. Despite this, Alvis carried out war production on aircraft engines (as sub-contractor of Rolls-Royce Limited) and other aircraft equipment.[1]

[EDIT] POST WAR

Car production resumed with a four-cylinder model, the TA 14, based on the pre-war 12/70. A solid, reliable and attractive car, the TA 14 fitted well the mood of sober austerity in post war Britain, but much of the magic attaching to the powerful and sporting pre-war models had gone and life was not easy for a specialist car manufacturer. Not only had Alvis lost their car factory but many of the prewar coachbuilders had not survived either and those that had were quickly acquired by other manufacturers. In fact, the post war history of Alvis is dominated by the quest for reliable and reasonably priced coachwork.[*citation needed*]

[EDIT] 1950S

1952 Alvis TA 21 Drophead Coupé

1952 Alvis TB 21 Sport Roadster

Alvis TC 21/100 « Grey Lady »

Smith-Clarke himself retired in 1950 and Dunn took over as chief engineer. In 1950 a new chassis and six-cylinder 3 Litre engine was announced and this highly successful engine became the basis of all Alvis models until production ceased in 1967. Saloon bodies for the TA 21, as the new model was called, again came from Mulliners of Birmingham as they had for the TA 14, with Tickford producing the dropheads. But with the first of these becoming part of Standard Triumph and the second being acquired by Aston Martin Lagonda, it was clear by 1954 that new arrangements would have to be made. By this time some of the most original and beautiful designs on the 3 Litre chassis were being produced by master coachbuilder Carrosserie Herman Graber of Switzerland and indeed these one-off designed cars are highly sought after today. With a licence in place, from 1955 all Alvis bodies became based on Graber designs. Early examples such as the TC108/G were built by Willowbrook Limited of Loughborough, but at such a high price that very few were made. Only after 1958 with the launch of the TD 21 did something resembling full-scale production resume as H. J. Mulliner & Co. and Park Ward, coachbuilders for Rolls-Royce and Bentley, contracted to build the bodies at a much lower price. These cars, the TD 21 and its later variants, the TE 21 and finally the TF 21 are well built, attractive and fast cars. However it was clear by the mid 1960s that with a price tag of nearly double that of the mass produced Jaguar, the end could not be far off.[*citation needed*]

From 1952 to 1955 Alec Issigonis, the creator of the later Mini worked for Alvis and designed a new model with a V8 engine which proved too expensive to produce.[*citation needed*]

[EDIT] 1960S

1961 Alvis TD 21

1965 Alvis TE 21

1967 Alvis TF 21 Cabriolet

Rover took a controlling interest in Alvis in 1965 and a Rover-designed mid-engined V8 coupé prototype named the P6BS was rumoured to be the new Alvis model but with the takeover by British Leyland this too was shelved. By the time the TF 21 was launched in 1966, (available, like its predecessors in both saloon and drophead form and with either manual or automatic gearbox), the model was beginning to show its age despite a top speed of 127 mph – the fastest Alvis ever produced. With only 109 sold and with political troubles aplenty in the UK car manufacturing business at that time, production finally ceased in 1967.

In 1968, a management buyout of the car operations was finalised and all the Alvis car design plans, customer records, stock of parts and remaining employees were transferred to Red Triangle.[*citation needed*]

[EDIT] 1970S TO PRESENT

Main article: Alvis plc
As part of Rover, Alvis Limited was incorporated into British Leyland but was bought by United Scientific Holdings plc in 1981. Subsequently the company's name was changed to **Alvis plc**. Alvis plc acquired a British truck manufacturer Universal Power Drives in 1994, naming their new subsidiary Alvis Unipower Limited. The trucks were subsequently branded as Alvis-Unipower. In 1998, Alvis plc acquired the armoured vehicle business of GKN plc, and the main UK manufacturing operation was moved from Coventry to Telford. The site of the Alvis works in Holyhead Road is now an out-of-town shopping complex, but its name, Alvis Retail Park, reflects the heritage of the site. In 2002 Alvis plc purchased Vickers Defence Systems to form the subsidiary Alvis Vickers Ltd, which was in turn purchased by BAE Systems in 2004. BAE Systems ended the use of the Alvis distinctive red triangle trademark.[*citation needed*]

In 2009, Red Triangle negotiated the legal transfer of the Alvis car trademarks. The following year, the company announced that the 4.3 Litre Short Chassis tourer would once again be available. All Alvis' records remain intact at the company's Kenilworth headquarters along with a large stock of period parts. One of the men to have worked on the very last Alvis car produced in 1967 is still retained by Red Triangle in a training capacity. Built to the original plans, the new car has been named the « Continuation Series », to reflect the 73-year interruption in its production between 1937 and 2010. It differs only in detail from the pre-war examples: for emissions, the engine is governed by an electronic fuel injection system with electronic ignition, brakes are hydraulic rather than cable, the steering column collapsible and the rear light arrangement reconfigured to conform to modern standards.[*citation needed*]

[edit] Alvis automobiles

[EDIT] LIST OF COMMERCIAL MODELS, 1920 – 1967

Figures in brackets show those cars that were bodied by Graber out of the number produced. Source TC108/G flash demonstration

MODEL NAME	TYPE	FROM	TO	NUMBER PRODUCED[3]	COMMENTS[4]
Alvis 10/30		1920	1923	603	
Alvis 11/40		1921	1923	382	
Alvis 12/40		1922	1925	1552	
Alvis 12/50	2 seat sports, drophead coupé, saloon	1923	1932	3616	Types: SA, SB, SC, TE, TF, SD, TG, TH, TJ

Alvis 12/80	2 seat sports	1926	1926		cost £1000, guaranteed maximum of 100 mph
Alvis 14.75		1927	1929	492	Types: SA, TA, TB
Alvis 12/75	Front-wheel drive; 2 seat sports, 4 seat sports, sports saloon	1928	1931	142	Types: short chassis (FA and FD), long chassis (FB and FE)
Alvis Silver Eagle	2 seat sports, coupé, drophead coupé, saloon	1929	1937	1357	Types: SA, SD, SE, SF, SG, TA, TB, TC
Alvis 12/60	2 seat sports, 4 seat sports, sports saloon	1931	1932	282	Types: TJ, TK, TL
Alvis Speed 20	sports tourer, drophead coupé, sports saloon	1932	1936	1165	Types: SA, SB, SC, SD
Alvis Firefly 12	4 light saloon, 6 light saloon, drophead coupé, sports tourer	1933	1934	904	Types: SA, SB
Alvis Crested Eagle	4 light saloon, 6 light saloon, limousine	1933	1940	652	Types: TA, TB, TC, TD, TE, TF, TG, TJ, TK
Alvis Firebird	4 light saloon, 6 light saloon, drophead coupé, sports tourer	1935	1939	449	Types: SA
Alvis 3.5 Litre		1936	1936	61	Types: SA
Alvis Silver Crest	4 light saloon, 6 light saloon, drophead coupé	1937	1940	344	Types: TF, TH
Alvis Speed 25	sports tourer, drophead coupé, sports saloon	1936	1940	536	
Alvis 4.3 Litre	sports saloon, sports tourer	1937	1940	204	
Alvis 12/70	sports tourer, drophead coupé, sports saloon	1938	1940	776	
Alvis TA 14	sports saloon, drophead coupé	1946	1950	3311	
Alvis TB 14	2 seater sports	1948	1950	100	
Alvis TA 21	sports saloon, drophead coupé	1950	1953	1316 (9)	
Alvis TB 21	2 seater sports	1950	1953	31	
Alvis TC 21 and TC 21/100 « Grey Lady »	sports saloon, drophead coupé	1953	1955	757 (23)	
Alvis TC 108G	sports saloon	1955	1958	37	
Alvis TD 21	2 dr saloon, drophead coupé	1958	1963	1073 (51)	
Alvis TE 21	2dr saloon, drophead coupé	1964	1966	352 (12)	
Alvis TF 21	2dr saloon, drophead coupé	1966	1967	106 (6)	

[EDIT] RACING CARS

Three British car companies—Alvis, Bentley, and Sunbeam—entered vehicles in local racing events between 1920 and 1930. Alvis and Sunbeam were at that time the only British companies building cars to Grand Prix formula racing specifications. Of these, Alvis was the only company whose race cars were characterized by front-wheel drive and fully independent suspension.[5]

Alvis was a pioneer of front-wheel drive vehicles. While J. Walter Christie had designed the first front-wheel drive race car, which he drove in the 1906 Vanderbilt Cup,[6] the next notable front-wheel drive race car was the supercharged Alvis 12/50 racing car designed by G.T. Smith-Clarke and W.M. Dunn, which was entered in the 1925 Kop Hill Climb in Princes Risborough in Buckinghamshire on March 28, 1925. Two months later (on Saturday, May 30, 1925), Harry Arminius Miller's Miller 122 front-wheel drive car was entered in the 1925 Indianapolis 500.[5]

[EDIT] GALLERY OF RACING CARS

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-
-

1925 Alvis 12/50 Type SC

-

1928 Alvis 12/75 Type FD 2 seat front-wheel drive sports car with a 1.5L supercharged engine and Tourist Trophy Race bodywork

-

1932 Alvis 12/60 Type TL 2 seat with « beetle-back » type coachwork

-

1934 Alvis Silver Eagle Type SF

-

1935 Alvis 4.3 Litre

-

1936 Alvis Speed 20

-

1936 Alvis Speed 25

-

1939 Alvis 4.3 Litre

-

Alvis 12/70

-
-

[edit] Alvis aircraft engines

An Alvis Leonides Mk.173 radial engine as fitted to the Bristol Sycamore helicopter. Note the large fan in front of the cylinders, typical of engines supplied to helicopters.

Aircraft engines produced by the Alvis company include:[7][8]

- Alcides
- Alcides Major
- Leonides
- Leonides Major
- Maeonides Major
- Pelides
- Pelides Major

[edit] Alvis military vehicles

An Alvis Stormer ambulance and an FV432 armoured personnel carrier of the 7th Armoured Brigade, 1st United Kingdom Armoured Division, proceed north after crossing the Saudi-Iraq border during Operation Desert Storm

- Alvis-Straussler AC2 prototype armoured car (Alvis-Straussler Ltd., 1935). Developed and produced for the Hungarian Army during World War II as the 39M Csaba armoured scout car.
- Alvis-Straussler AC3 armoured car (Alvis-Straussler Ltd., 1937)
- Alvis-Straussler light medium tank (Alvis-Straussler Ltd., 1937)
- Hefty gun tractor (Alvis Mechanisation Ltd., 1937)
- LAC armoured car (Alvis Mechanisation Ltd., 1938)
- Dingo Scout armoured light reconnaissance vehicle (Alvis Mechanisation Ltd., 1939)
- The Saladin, Saracen, Salamander and Stalwart series of armoured cars
- The Combat Vehicle Reconnaissance (Tracked) series of tracked armoured personnel carriers
- FV432 armoured personnel carrier

Hungarian automotive engineer Nicholas Straussler (1891 – 1966) had designed an armoured car in 1932 (which has since been given the name AC1), which was built by the Manfred Weiss company under licence in Budapest. When Hungary aligned itself with

Germany soon after that, Straussler emigrated to England.[9] Straussler's small new company, Straussler Mechanisations Ltd, lacked the necessary resources and capacity to build the vehicle on a large scale, so Straussler approached T.G. John, and Alvis-Straussler Ltd, a short-lived joint venture company, was formed in July 1936.[9][10] The protoype vehicle produced, the Alvis Straussler AC2, was built upon the AC1 chassis. The first AC3—the first operational purpose-built armoured car ever produced—was delivered in 1937 by Alvis-Straussler Ltd, built upon the AC2 protoype.[9] A total of 27 of these vehicles were built (12 for the Royal Air Force, 3 for the Portuguese Army, and 12 for the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army).[10]

The Saladin, Saracen, Salamander and Stalwart vehicles were all built on the same chassis. Saladin armoured car (FV601 model) was the first of these to be designed and built. Several different models of the Saracen were produced, including the FV603 armoured troop carrier, FV604 Regimental Command Vehicle, and FV610 Armoured Command Post vehicle. The Stalwart was produced as the FV620 and FV622 models, while the Salamander crash tender was produced as the FV652 model.[11] The FV611 model was also built to serve as an armoured ambulance.[12]

The Combat Vehicle Reconnaissance (Tracked) series of tracked armoured personnel carriers includes the FV101 Scorpion, FV102 Striker, FV103 Spartan, FV104 Samaritan, FV105 Sultan, FV106 Samson, FV107 Scimitar, FV4333 Stormer, and the Streaker.[11][13] The first vehicle of this series was the FV101 Scorpion, which was the first aluminium tank ever to be built. The hull and turret are actually fabricated from a welded aluminium-zinc-magnesium alloy. 17 Scorpion prototypes were delivered for field testing in February 1969.[11]

[EDIT] GALLERY OF MILITARY VEHICLES

-
  Dingo Scout armoured light reconnaissance vehicle
-
  FV601 Saladin
-
  FV603 Saracen
-
  FV652 Salamander airport crash tender at the Royal Air Force Museum London
-
  FV620 Stalwart
-
  FV101 Scorpion

-
  FV102 Striker
-
  FV103 Spartan
-
  FV105 Sultan
- FV106 Samson
-
  FV107 Scimitar
-
  FV4333 Stormer
-
  Armoured Vehicle Launched Bridge (AVLB), manufactured by Alvis Unipower Limited

[edit] Alvis ownership

Nearly 10% of all Alvis cars ever manufactured remain in existence today, and they are a source of great pride to their owners.[1] The Alvis Owners Club is a club for all Alvis car and military vehicle enthusiasts. It was founded in 1951. It has 1,700 members. It hosts International Weekends annually, where owners from the UK and overseas display their cars. In 2009 it was held at Polesden Lacey.[*citation needed*]

The Alvis Register is a club with over 600 members, which is dedicated to all things related to the vintage Alvis motor cars (1920 to 1932). Members can access a wealth of technical and historical information and share their interest for these fascinating vehicles with like-minded enthusiasts. The vast majority of owners retain an eligible car or cars.[14]

[edit] Gallery

[edit] References

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5. ^ *a b* Day, Kenneth (1989). « Part II: Racing history ». In Iles, Robert. *Alvis:the story of the red triangle* (2nd ed.). Somerset,

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[edit] External links

Wikimedia Commons has media related to: ***Alvis vehicles***

- Alvis Cars Ltd
- Alvis Register
- Red Triangle
- Brief history of Alvis
- History of the Alvis company
- Alvis history
- Alvis cars site
- Alvis fighting vehicles
- Alvis Owners Club
- Alvis cars photos & specs
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